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THE

METHODISTS VINDICATED

FROM THE

ASPERSIONS

CAST UPON THEM BY

The Rev. Mr. HADDON SMITH.

IN A

SERIES of LETTERS to that GENTLEMAN,

By PHILALETHES. K.

L O N D O N :

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[Price ONE SHILING.]

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L E T T E R S

TO

The Rev. Mr. Haddon Smith,

OCCASIONED BY

His *Curious* Sermon, entitled,
METHODISTICAL DECEIT;

WITH A

DEDICATION to the Right Rev. and Rev. the
Parishioners of St. Matthew, Bethnall-Green.

By PHILALETHES.

Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that
judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou con-
demnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same
things.

PAUL.

Buy the truth, and sell it not.

SOLOMON.

Seeing—that there ever was, and ever will be, religious de-
lusions in this world, it highly becomes every one, who
has any regard to his own peace and happiness, both here
and hereafter, to be upon his guard; and, by a constant
perusal of the Holy Scriptures, to establish his faith upon
a firm foundation; and then he will not be driven away
by every wind of doctrine, and cunning craftiness of men,
whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

METHODISTICAL DECEIT.

THE T. T. R. S.

Rev. Mr. H. H. Smith

THE CHURCH OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL

Devotion to the Holy Spirit and the
Fruitfulness of the Ministry

PHILADELPHIA

There are many who say that the
fruitfulness of the ministry is the
result of the Holy Spirit's work in the
heart of the minister.

It is true, and it is not
surprising that the fruitfulness of the
ministry is the result of the Holy Spirit's
work in the heart of the minister. The
fruitfulness of the ministry is the result
of the Holy Spirit's work in the heart
of the minister. The fruitfulness of the
ministry is the result of the Holy Spirit's
work in the heart of the minister.

PHILADELPHIA

DEDICATION,

TO THE

PARISHIONERS OF ST. MATTHEW,
BETHNALL-GREEN.

*Right Reverend and Reverend Brethren
and Sisters,*

YOUR teacher hath informed the world, that you are disposed to hear the plain truths of the Gospel. Upon the supposition that you also endeavour to regulate your lives according to those truths, I address you as above.

There is a set of men, indeed, who would confine all honourable titles to themselves. But common sense will teach you, that every man is to be revered, who acts up to the dignity of his station; that a
carman,

carman, or *porter*, who lives a good and exemplary life, is as truly reverend as an archbishop ; and that a proud, covetous, and sensual archbishop (and such there has been) is *right contemptible*. The scriptures will likewise inform you, that there may be *reverend women*. Dorcas was truly reverend. I would hope that there are such women in your society. Therefore, as I am persuaded that women are as deeply interested in religious subjects as the men can be, I have chosen to address you, contrary to the modern strain, not only as *my right reverend and reverend brethren*, but likewise as *my right reverend and reverend brethren and sisters*.

“ The occasion of *the following letters* is well known to you all. I composed

posed *them* with a full intention of making them public ; *to give your orthodox guardian a transient view of his fallibility* ; and to take off, if possible, any bad impressions that *he* may have made upon your minds, by insinuating, in his *high-church, authoritative language*, that the true Gospel is *nowhere* preached but in the *established church*.”

That every thing which is amiss in *church and state* may be speedily reformed, that you may judge candidly between Mr. Smith and me, and that you may know the truth, and that the truth may make you free, is the fervent prayer of, right reverend and reverend brethren and sisters,

Your very humble Servant,

PHILALETHES.

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THE

METHODIST VINDICATED,

By J. J. J.

LETTER I;

REVEREND SIR,

YOU may possibly take up this pamphlet with a smile of contempt, exclaim that it is the bungling work of some canting Methodist, and find yourself astonished at the blindness and obstinacy of the author, for being so hardy as not to bend to the force of your irresistible arguments. But, notwithstanding your *lawful* pretences to the Holy Ghost, you may assure yourself that I am not a Methodist. You will, I believe, ingenuously acknowledge this, before you have read the half of my remarks upon your *fulminating*

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sermon.

sermon. You will not, I hope, however, change your first cry of *Methodistical cant, fanaticism, enthusiastical delusion, to heresy, infidelity, rank Deism at best!* and conclude, *Alas, how few can be saved!* No; your own indignation rises against the uncharitable censures of others. Besides, you would be thought, in the very first sentence of your discourse, (though you afterwards contradict yourself) to regard the plain truths of the Gospel as our only rule of faith. If I try your sentiments, therefore, according to this rule, you should not find fault. Neither have you any reason to complain, that I require you, should I be able to shew that you walk not according to this rule, either to alter your sentiments and your conduct, or to produce to me some other rule of faith that is more infallible and divine.

But, without any farther preface, the first remark that I would make upon your publication, is, that you have entirely mistaken the sense of the apostle. By *handling the word of God deceitfully*, he does not mean, it is obvious, the ignorant misapplication of it, nor the false representation of some of its doctrines, unless the will and the understanding be at variance with the doctrines that are taught. On the contrary, to handle the word of God deceitfully, is to declare that to be *true* which we believe to be *repugnant* to the word of God, or wilfully to conceal a part of what we know

know the word of God teacheth, or to huddle together an heterogeneous mixture of truth and falshood, and merely to serve our own interests, either to acquire, or to secure, the honours and preferments of this world, to defend and propagate this palatable system of truth and falshood, contrary to the conviction of our own minds *. It never entered into the apostle's head, to put *ignorance* and *deceit* upon a level; or to pronounce those erroneous sentiments deceitful, which did not, from the cunning craftiness, lucrative views, dishonest artifices, and contradictory sentiments of their authors, carry the *mark in the forehead*. Once, the apostle himself, without any deceit, blasphemed the name of Jesus, and violently persecuted his faithful followers to death; and few, very few, I fear, since his time, have been endowed with such a degree of infallibility, as never to mistake, or undesignedly to counteract, some principle of the Gospel

Hence, I am led to conclude, that all your charges against the Methodists of *handling the word of God deceitfully*, are absolutely groundless. But these charges are, I hope, the precipitate effects of intemperate passion, which, as much as the *wildest fanaticism*, makes every object appear to us in a wrong light; otherwise, they savour too much of a narrow bi-

* This interpretation of the text is demonstrable, you may perceive, from the original, *μηδὲ δολικῶς τοῦ λόγου τῷ κυρίῳ*.

gotry, and an uncharitable spirit. If you will, indeed, point out a Methodist, whose *doctrines* are contrary to his avowed *sentiments*, or whose addresses to *God* and to the *people* are diametrically opposite; or who *one* hour teacheth for *truth*, what the *next* hour he declaims against as a *falsehood*, and who it is evident at the same time is capable of distinguishing between truth and falsehood—if you can point out such a Methodist, I will be as severe upon him as you can be. But, until this be done, you must give me leave to think as favourably of the Methodists as of other mistaken and uncharitable Christians. That you have not done this, however, in any of the evidences you have hitherto produced, to shew that they *handle the word of God deceitfully*, I can, I think, easily demonstrate.

In the first place, then, that they cry down human learning as unnecessary, and imagine that the spirit teacheth them what to speak, is no proof that they *handle the word of God deceitfully*; because they may possibly believe all this. And who will pretend to say, that there is no distinction to be made between *weakness* and *villainy*? Or, who will pretend to say, that the vain application of a text that was evidently peculiar to the apostle, when this may be done *ignorantly*, and consequently *innocently*, is a sure mark of fraud and imposture? Will Mr. Haddon Smith say, that every lordly bishop *handles the word of God deceitfully*,

ceitfully, when he vainly applies to himself a text of scripture that was evidently peculiar to Jesus Christ?—When he pretends, in the words of Christ, and as if he was equally divinely commissioned by the Father, to confer the Holy Ghost upon every pious stripling who has learned to read Latin and Greek at Oxford or Cambridge? But the bishops, you will say perhaps, apply the text in question only to the encouragement of the *regular clergy*, as they are humbly called. The crime of the Methodists is, that they should apply their text to the encouragement of every illiterate carman or porter, to set himself up as a preacher, under the pretence of inspiration. What sticks here is, that the carman and porter should set themselves up as preachers.

I will not dispute with you the propriety of applying the word *preacher* to any one who is only a *teacher* of what has been long published to the world. But let me ask you, good Sir, have not the carman and porter the same right to set themselves up as preachers, that any other man has, without the least proof of his being divinely commissioned, to set up others as preachers? Who gave our bishops the right of setting up preachers, and imposing them upon the people, whether they will or not? The Christian laity have now the only right of setting up preachers; and if they think proper to chuse a carman, or porter, whom they imagine capable of instructing them in the plain truths
of

of the Gospel, and who is, I affirm, if he be a man of natural abilities, and has seriously studied his Bible, as capable of instructing them in those truths, as others are, who have only studied Horace, or Juvenal, or Cicero, or Plato, or Xenophon, or the thirty-nine articles—who dares to be so impious as to wish to abridge them of their liberty? Supposing even that they reject the more capable, but that they do this according to the best of their understandings, they would surely be losers by an exchange. For if they are blindly led, which must be the case when they do not exercise their own judgments, you know the consequence.

But what seems to provoke your wrath against the Methodists full as much as your apprehensions that they *handle the word of God deceitfully*, is, their *insinuating that the true Gospel is not preached in the established church, their continually fulminating against the established clergy, their representing them as greatly degenerated, fearing man more than God, having only an outward character, but no inward call to the ministry, nothing of the Holy Spirit*. Can you, however, pretend to say that there are not many of the clergy who deserve these reflections; those who never preach at all, and all your non-residents, who, after they have secured the loaves and the fishes, suffer their flocks to wander where they will. Or, supposing the contrary, may not the Methodists believe

believe their censures to be just? And, if you know them to be mistaken, should you not pity them, pray for them, and instruct them, without any hard names, in the spirit of meekness? But you, Sir, it seems, speak from authority; you know the bottom of their hearts. You assert at least, (you have not proved it) that their only motive for dealing in defamation is, that *they find that a discourse well seasoned with this ingredient is swallowed down with the greatest eagerness.* To use your own words, "Very charitable truly!" I had almost said, that you yourself are a Methodist, if uncharitable censures be the standing characteristics of one.

Your character of an enthusiast I cannot pass over. It is somewhat curious. He is one, it seems, *who imagines that he has more of the Holy Spirit than all the clergy put together*; or, as you afterwards explain yourself, one *who would have every thing new-modelled, who would even have the standing rules of the church give way to every wild freak*; that is, I suppose, who would have any alteration at all made in the church, though according to the soundest principles of reason and scripture. Every one, therefore, is an enthusiast, who is not of the church.

But, without animadverting upon your definition, how can you, with any consistency or propriety, apply the term *enthusiast* to the Methodist preacher who appeared in your church? Was not he moved by the
Holy

Holy Ghost to take upon him the ministerial office? and, after he was thus moved, did not the bishop give him another Holy Ghost? How happens it, that his Holy Ghost differs so much from yours? The reason, perhaps, is this—The Methodist thought himself moved by the Holy Ghost, and believed that he received the Holy Ghost. You, on the contrary, though forming very solemnly the same pretensions with him, believe that no Holy Ghost is now given; for you affirm, that *all extraordinary gifts have ceased in the church.*

I must also take notice here of your fondness for introducing as frequently the *established church* and the *established clergy*; but shall make no other remark upon these *proud, swelling words*, than that Christians have nothing to do with any established church, or established clergy. If you would see this demonstrated, look into the *Confessional*, the work of an author who was once a churchman, and who is still *maliciously* reported to be in the church *. Or, if you would be informed from a better book, read the New Testament. Or, if you would rather see what is said by other writers, attend carefully to what an angel of light has observed in his Free Addresses to the Dissenters, to Dr. Balguy, and to Justice Blackstone.

* Nay, it has been since reported, that the author is training up his son for the established church. But *credat Judæas apella!* The world, I hope, cannot furnish so melancholy a proof of the depravity of human nature.

But,

But your next argument, to prove that the Methodists *handle the word of God deceitfully*, is, that *they undermine the Christian priesthood, vilify the parochial clergy, and abuse a lawful priesthood.* "The Gospel, you say, nowhere

countenances such behaviour; so it is evident that they handle the word of God deceitfully in this respect, because they preach it as the word of God, when in reality it is not so."

The Gospel, indeed, nowhere countenances reviling or abuse; though it allows us to give the wicked as well as the good their just characters, informing us, however, that it is only by their fruits either can be known. When the Methodists then declaim against slothful and faithless shepherds, wolves in sheeps cloathing, who, instead of nourishing and guarding their flocks, devour them, and debauch them by their own dissolute example; and when they denounce woe, woe, against such men, they are not guilty of any opposition to the word of God. But they are very criminal indeed, if they misrepresent, and load with opprobrious names, the sober, the pious, the vigilant, and charitable. This, however, they may do, not without counteracting the word of God, but without handling it deceitfully. For this they may do by the force of a blind zeal, without any fraudulent design.

They may be so fettered by the prejudices of education, or so biassed to human systems, as entirely to mistake the sense of the word of

God, as to imagine even that he hateth those who are not of their sentiments; and that there can be no salvation beyond the pales of their faith. And, when this is the case, we should endeavour to convince them by mild persuasion, and scripture arguments. But we ought always to remember, that deceit and error are very different things: and we ought always to know, that the only way of working a reformation, is to attack those vices which people are guilty of, and not to bring an opprobrious charge against them of vices, which, for what we can see, their hearts abhor.

But how, Sir, can you support your assertion, that the Methodists undermine the Christian priesthood, and pretend that they are warranted so to do by the word of God? The thing seems impossible. For there is not one syllable of a Christian priesthood, as a distinct order of men from other Christians, in the word of God. There is only mention made of one high-priest of our profession, Jesus Christ; and it is again said, that all Christians without distinction, both hearers and teachers equally, are called to be *priests unto God*. From which, a very humiliating truth will follow, that your clerk is as much a priest as you are. But, surely, the Methodists cannot so much as dream of undermining either Jesus Christ, or all Christians, and pretend to vindicate their conduct upon the testimony of the word

word of God. This remark is applicable to what you say of their villifying the *parochial clergy*. Do the Methodists villify all Christians who live in parishes? But every Christian, you must know, is either a clergyman or clergywoman, as much as his grace of Canterbury is a clergyman *. Prove the contrary from the word of God, if you can.

But, lastly, you say, that the Methodists abuse a *lawful priesthood*. We have mentioned the word priesthood before. What do you mean by a lawful priesthood? Those who call themselves Christians, and yet suffer others to lord it over their faith? If so, the Methodists are warranted from the word of God to say some very disagreeable things of them. But, if I understand you right, by the *Christian priesthood*, the *lawful priesthood*, and the *parochial clergy*, you mean the very same thing, or the very same persons, namely, the teachers of the established church. But it happens unfortunately for you, that such teachers are nowhere

* You know that the word *clergyman* is derived from the word *κληρος*, a *lot*, or inheritance, and that it is applied by the apostle, in Eph. i. 11. to all Christians, men and women, without distinction. *Εν ᾧ καὶ ἐκληρονομήμεν*, which is rendered by our translators, "In whom we, also we, have obtained an inheritance;" but which may be rendered, "By whom we are made clergymen and clergywomen." The meaning of the word, I suppose, came to be changed, when the Roman pontiff and his creatures laid a plan for dividing all the lands of this and other kingdoms between them, and sharing them out amongst *them only*, by lot.

mentioned in the word of God. If, however, the Methodists tell lies of them, you may comfort yourself with the reflection, that they shall answer for their conduct before the God of truth.

But you again say, that the Methodists *handle the word of God deceitfully, because they preach up the doctrine of irresistible grace, grounding it upon the obscure passages of scripture, without taking notice of the plain passages that are contrary to it.* This very ingenious observation, after what I have already said, needs but a very short answer. Are you sure, however, that they take no notice of the plain passages that oppugn the doctrine in question? Or, if they do not, may they not, possibly, without any evil design, mistake their meaning, and therefore neglect them without any deceit? Have you yourself never heard a Methodist introduce those plain passages, and, though most strangely, I dare not say dishonestly, pervert their obvious meaning? I fancy, if you have often been present at their public assemblies, (which is to be supposed from your perfect knowledge of them) you may have heard them argue in this manner, if not upon the same text, upon a similar one. "Our Lord says, Come unto me, all you that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Ay, very true; but what strength is there in the arm of flesh? Who can come unto him, unless he draws us by his grace?"

grace? For, without me, says the precious Redeemer, you can do nothing; and, by grace you are saved, says the apostle Paul, and this, not of yourselves, lest any man should boast. But if he once draw us by his spirit, if he touch our hearts, and sprinkle them with his blood, and incline our wills to his will, then are we passed from death unto life; for we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us." Now if the Methodists are so unhappily biased by prejudices, as to believe this absurd sense, put upon a plain text of scripture, to be the true sense of it, can you charitably, or conscientiously, charge them with a wilful, diabolical misrepresentation of it?

But you farther affirm, that the Methodists *handle the word of God deceitfully, because they preach the doctrine of perseverance.* But may you not as well charge them with handling the word of God deceitfully, because they do not understand it? You think that the doctrine is not taught in scripture. They may possibly think otherwise. Nay, it is evident from your own quotation out of one of their sermons, that they think the scriptures decide in their favour. Argue the matter out then among yourselves. But that you, my good Sir, may not argue to no purpose, remember that hard names make no converts.

You likewise charge the Methodists with *handling the word of God deceitfully, because*
they

they preach the doctrine of election, and do not examine all the texts and contexts of scripture relating to it. But upon what authority do you build your assertion? How are you certain that they do not, in their own opinions, examine all the texts of scripture relating to this point, as carefully as you yourself have done? Do not numbers of them reason very metaphysically upon this very subject? and are they not so sanguine of the strength of their arguments, as evidently to fear no opposition? Have you not heard them quote, "God is no respecter of persons," as the pillar of their adversaries doctrine, and demolish it with two or three questions? "Will God make no distinction between the wicked and the good, between his elect and his non-elect, between the murderer and the saint? Yes certainly; otherwise there could be no occasion for a future day of reckoning. But the apostle's meaning is, that God is no respecter of one nation more than of another, no respecter of the Jews more than of the Gentiles, but that *he gathereth the called according to his purpose out of all nations.*" You may make what reflections you please upon their reasoning here. Your business is, however, to prove that they are insincere in the application of their arguments.

But I must do you the justice to acknowledge, that you seem to think you have gone too far upon this head. You are, not without
some

some reason, afraid that you may be thought to have contradicted the seventeenth article of the church: though you easily get over the difficulty, saying, "That article mentions nothing of an absolute determination of men to happiness or misery, without any regard to their actions, and that therefore no man is obliged to put a sense upon the article contrary to the scriptures." What? if the article supposes an absolute determination of men to happiness or misery, are you then *obliged* to defend the article in opposition to the scriptures? Or, would you rest the importance of the scriptures, not upon their divine original, but upon the sense of your article? Justly, then, may the Methodists cry down the established church, and the established clergy.

But how comes it, Sir, that you are so positive in determining that this article mentions nothing of an absolute determination of men to happiness or misery? Your brother Bowman of Suffolk has furnished the world with very plausible arguments for determining the contrary. And, notwithstanding your bold assertion, it still appears to me, that every unprejudiced person whatever, who gives the article a fair reading, must think that it mentions, at least, an absolute determination of men to happiness. Was not this doctrine universally taught and received in the world, at the time the article was framed? Was it not the constant and avowed doctrine of the compilers,

pilers, and of all the reformers? And what
 else can the first sentence of the article mean?
 "Predestination to life, is the everlasting pur-
 pose of God, whereby, before the foundations
 of the world were laid, he hath constantly de-
 creed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver
 from curse and damnation those whom he
 hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to
 bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation,
 as vessels made to honour *." The compilers,
 indeed, afterwards say, that the predestinated
 walk religiously in good works. But, by this,
 they evidently mean no more than the Me-
 thodists themselves allow, that those who have
 received the grace of God are afterwards ne-
 cessarily exercised in good works. This is
 demonstrable from the eleventh article, which
 positively says, "We are accounted righteous
 before God—not for our works and deservings.
 Wherefore, that we are justified by *faith only*,
 is a most wholesome doctrine."

Yet, in the same page, you charge the Me-
 thodists with *handling the word of God deceit-
 fully, because they preach faith without works*.
 You surely should ingenuously have added,
 "and the church of England also handles the
 word of God deceitfully."

But, in the next page, you bring the same
 charge against them, *for denying the freedom of*

* Strange, that we should be acquainted with the coun-
 sel of God, that is secret to us!

man's will. Now, Sir, your own church says, "We have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God preventing us;" that is, unless we are irresistibly wrought upon, as the Methodists say. Nay, the thirteenth article says, "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his spirit," (that is, what the Methodists call the *inward calling*, and on which they found all holiness and happiness) "are not pleasant to God—Yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded," (that is, by his directing and irresistible power) "we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." Condemn the Methodists, and defend your church, if you can. If they handle the word of God deceitfully, you will find it no easy matter to vindicate yourself from the same crime.

This I intend to shew more particularly in my next letter. In the mean time,

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your humble Servant,

PHILALETHES.

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LETTER

L E T T E R II.

REVEREND SIR,

I Have endeavoured to prove, in my former letter, that you have entirely perverted the sense of the apostle in your text; and consequently that all your charges against the Methodists, of *handling the word of God deceitfully*, grounded upon your interpretation of this text, are absolutely without any foundation. If, however, you would still insinuate the contrary, I hope in this letter, according to your own arguments, to convince the world, that if the Methodists handle the word of God deceitfully, you yourself do the same thing: For you, as well as they, contradict the doctrines of scripture.

You have said in your sermons, for instance, that God has thought fit to *conceal* from us the nature of mysteries; whereas, according to the scriptures, God has *revealed* to us the mystery which was hid from ages. You likewise mention the merits and satisfaction of Christ, as the means of our obtaining eternal life; and you ascribe equal glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, without any scripture authority, nay, in direct contradiction to the whole

whole tenor of scripture. And, if I may be allowed to infer what your sentiments are from your articles and creeds *, a long catalogue of your doctrines is a notorious opposition to the plainest passages of scripture.

As a churchman, you must declare that we ought to call men fathers, reverend fathers, and right reverend fathers in God, and be subject to them as such, contrary to the commands of Christ, "to call no man father upon earth," and "not to lord it over God's heritage." And you must also declare, contrary to the same commands, that "Christians have a power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith." You must, farther, teach the triplicity of the Godhead, and assert, that the very and eternal God was born of a woman, took man's nature upon him, was crucified, died, was buried, and descended into Hell, in flat repugnancy to the word of God, to the dictates of reason and common sense, and to the whole volume of nature. You must also avow, that body, flesh, and bones, can inherit the kingdom, though Jesus Christ, *the way and the truth*, has assured us, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of Heaven. You also proclaim to the world,

* And this I have certainly a right to do, if you would not be charged with hypocrisy for professing what you do not believe, and with blasphemy for addressing the Supreme Being under a character which you do not think belongs to him.

that the Holy Ghost is very and eternal God, without any warrant from scripture; and you assert, that the three Creeds, Nice Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and the Apostle's Creed, ought thoroughly to be believed, and that they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy scripture. After this, indeed, you may assert any thing. You should rather have said, that all human creeds are damned engines of contention. The Athanasian Creed is more. It gives Jesus Christ and all his apostles the lie; for they all plainly and harmoniously declare, that the Father only is the one living and true God, and that besides him there is no God. The Athanasian Creed, farther, brings every man in the world under the sentence of everlasting damnation; for it says, that every man who wholly believeth it not, shall without doubt perish everlastingly; whereas you must acknowledge it, supposing it *true*, to be an incomprehensible mystery, and therefore what cannot be believed.

But you farther assert, that original, or birth sin, belongeth to every person born into the world, and deserveth God's wrath and damnation, contrary to the scriptures. You also assert, that we have no power to do good works, and that we are justified by faith only, contrary to the scriptures, and to yourself. You likewise call the *sacraments certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace*, and say that they work invisibly in us, contrary to the scriptures. And
you

you believe and teach, &c. &c. &c. else you justly incur all the abuse which the Methodists have thrown out against you.

But there is one article of your faith which is sufficient, you may possibly think, to atone for all the absurdities, contradictions, and anathemas of all the others; and that is this: You believe, that by muttering only a few words over a dying person, you can instantly wash away all his sins, and waft him (though his whole life has been a scene of iniquities) to the regions of endless bliss. How contradictory are your anathemas to your absolutions? and how contradictory both your anathemas and absolutions are to the gospel of Christ, He that hath eyes to see, let him see.

I need not add any farther proofs, I think, to shew that, if the Methodists are guilty, you are equally so. But I have some other thoughts of consequence to communicate to you. These, however, I propose for the subject of another letter, supposing that you imagine the present long enough already.

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your humble Servant,

PHILALETHES.

LETTER

LETTER III.

REVEREND SIR,

THE next thing that I will notice, is your fling at *the enthusiasm of Methodists, Papists, and fanatics of every denomination.* You allow, then, that error may creep into your own church; for you allow, and this is generous, that there are enthusiasts belonging to every denomination. Was this concession forced from you, because the Methodists are of the same denomination with yourself? You can tell. But, however this be, every one, I imagine, without exception, who is out of the bosom of the church, is, in your eye, an enthusiast. Well! I can in some measure account for your paying this compliment to all the dissenting Protestants of this country, and to all the members of all foreign Protestant churches.

But you seem to discover too narrow a spirit, when you lump the orthodox Papists with all heretical Protestants. Surely the Papists, Sir, deserve to be treated with more civility, moderation, and gentleness. *Their* creeds are *your* creeds. The constitution of their church is very nearly the same with the constitution of

of your church. You acknowledge * their ordination to be valid and apostolical: and their worship is performed with such *decency and order*, that you ought, in courtesy, to have passed over those trifles in which you disagree. Indeed you do not acknowledge the Pope, but the king and parliament, to be the head of your church. But why may not the Papists submit to a fallible head in religious matters, as well as the Protestants? There are, it is true, some other differences between the two churches; but they are such differences as can scarcely be distinguished, amidst the almost universal and admirable harmony that subsists between them. The Athanasian Creed, that infallible and adorable system of the true, orthodox, and *only* saving faith, reconciles them all. This creed, at least, with the many other marks of the *true church* that I am now going to mention, must reconcile them, if the

* You refuse to admit any Dissenters into your church as ministers, though already *ordained*, unless they submit to your *ordination* likewise. I wish that you had never admitted any of them into your church. But you receive with open arms those who have been *ordained in the church of Rome, in that pure, apostolical church*, without imposing any *other ordination* upon them. I wonder, if *Timothy* was now living, who was ordained *by § the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*, whether or not you would admit him into your church, without renouncing the validity of his first ordination?

§ 1. Tim. iv. 14.

contending

contending parties are not very unreasonable on both sides. For *,

Do the Papists submit to human authority in matters of faith? so do you. Is their church governed by reverend and right reverend lords, archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons, rectors, vicars, curates, chancellors, officinals, prebends, canons, &c. without so much as the shadow of any warrant from the scriptures? so is your church exactly. Do they superstitiously, or orthodoxically, that is, unscripturally, consecrate churches, chapels, cathedrals, burying-grounds, bishops, &c. so do you. Do they erect altars in their churches, agreeably to the will of pope Sylvester, in the year 334? so do you. Do they, agreeably to the will of pope Gregory, in the eighth century, use litanies, liturgies, collects, ordinaries, responses, singing service, The Lord have mercy upon us, &c. so do you. Do their priests wear surplices, in conformity to Pagan antiquity, and to the edict of pope Adrian, in the year 796? so do your priests. Do they, in conformity to Pagan custom likewise, bow to the altar, and to the East? so do you. Have they their matins, their confessions, their

* The greatest part of the remainder of this letter is taken from Mr. De Laune, one of those generous spirits who dare to sacrifice their lives in the sacred cause of liberty and truth. I am glad of an opportunity of recommending his valuable performance to the notice of the world.

crossings, their holidays, their fasts, feasts, vigils, confirmation, &c. so have you. Do they stand at the reading of the Gospels, according to the wisdom of pope Anastasius, in the year 400? so do you. Do they kneel at the altar, according to the invention of the thirteenth century, after transubstantiation was established? so do you. Have they their god-fathers and godmothers at baptism? Do they believe that this rite regenerates, and mystically washes away sin? And do they believe, that when this rite is performed, infants are capable of understanding, reasoning, believing, &c. so have, and believe you. And are they not able to produce one syllable from the Christian records, in justification of those numerous ceremonies? You are exactly in the same circumstances.

Farther, have they their Rogation-week, according to the institution of pope Leo, in the year 444? so have you? Do they prescribe particular habits for their priests, such as gowns, tippets, four-cornered caps, &c. according to pope Zachary, in the year 737? so do you. Do they use organs in their churches, according to the fancy of pope Vitellianus, in the eighth century? so do you. Do they, in obedience to the decree of pope Clement, from Septuagesima till Easter, from Rogation till Whitsontide, and from Advent to Epiphany, prohibit marriages? This doctrine of devils is translated from their rubric to yours. Have

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they

they their Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays fasts, according to Boniface, in the fifth century? so have you. Does their kalendar divide the year into feasts, vigils, fasts, and working days? so does yours. The only difference here is, that their fasts, &c. are more numerous than yours: but all yours, except the Martyrdom of the Blessed King Charles, are transcribed from theirs. Their feasts are divided into moveables and fixed; so are yours. Their moveables are all the same with yours. Their Easter-day is the same with yours. Their Advent-Sunday, the nearest to the feast of St. Andrew, is the same with yours. Their Septuagesima-Sunday is nine weeks before Easter; so is yours. Their Sexagesima is eight weeks before Easter; so is yours. Their Quinquagesima is seven weeks before Easter; so is yours. Their Quadragesima is six weeks before Easter; so is yours. Their Rogation-Sunday is five weeks, their Whitsunday seven weeks, their Ascension-Day forty days, their Trinity-Sunday eight weeks after Easter, and twenty-four Sundays after Trinity; so are yours.

Their fixed feasts are likewise the same with yours. Their Circumcision, January the 1st. Their Epiphany, January the 6th. Their conversion of St. Paul, January the 25th. Their Purification, February the 2d. Their St. Matthias, February the 24th. Their Annunciation, March the 25th. Their St. Mark,
April

April the 25th. Their St. Philip and Jacob,
 May the 1st. Their St. Barnabas, June the
 11th. Their St. John the Baptist, June the
 24th. Their St. Peter, June the 29th. Their
 St. James, July the 25th. Their St. Bartho-
 lomew, August the 24th. Their St. Matthew,
 September the 21st. Their St. Michael, Sep-
 tember the 29th. Their St. Luke, October
 the 18th. Their St. Simon and Jude, Octo-
 ber the 28th. Their All Saints, like the Pa-
 gan *Omnium Sanctorum*, or *Пантовъ Святыхъ*, Novem-
 ber the 1st. Their St. Andrew, November
 the 30th. Their St. Thomas, December the
 21st. Their Christmas, December the 25th.
 Their St. Stephen, December the 26th. Their
 St. John the Evangelist, December the 27th.
 Their Innocents, December the 28th.—They
 have also their Easter-Monday and Tuesday,
 and their Whit-Monday and Tuesday; and
 so have you. Their fasts also are forty
 days in Lent. Their Ember-days are the
 Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays after the
 first Sunday in Lent, after the Pentecost, after
 the 14th of September, and after the 13th of
 December; so are yours. Their Rogation-
 days are likewise the same, the Mondays,
 Tuesdays, and Wednesdays before Easter, and
 all the Fridays in the year. Of all which, as
 Mr. De Laune says, not one word in the New
 Testament; none but your sovereign lord the
 Pope hath required these things at your hands.

Their service is likewise divided, as yours

is, into matin and evening songs; and appropriated to the particular feasts, fasts, vigils, baptism, eucharist, marriage, burial, confirmation, visitation of the sick, churching of women, &c. so is yours. And they and you have your collects, confessions, absolutions, prescript lessons of the Psalms, Epistles, Gospels, Prophets, and Apocrypha, and litanies, anthems or canticles, and comminations, appropriated to the above offices. The following you have, right orthodoxically, taken word for word from the Mass-book, *Benedicite Omnia Opera, Benedictus Dominus, Deus Israel, Magnificat anima mea, Nunc dimittis, Quicumque vult, Te Deum, Gloria Patri*, repeated often, and after every Psalm, *Gloria in excelsis*, and *Pater Noster*, often in every service and exercise.

You agree with them in rites and ceremonies. They kneel at confession and absolution; so do you. They stand at the rehearsal of the Apostle's Creed, and repeat it after the priest; so do you. They kneel at the rehearsal of the Lord's Prayer, repeating it after the priest; so do you. They stand at *Gloria Patri*, and at the *Athanasian Creed*; so do you. They repeat, *Lord and Christ have mercy upon us, &c.* after the priest, kneeling; so do you. They make responses, in saying or singing litanies; so do you. They kneel at the Lord's Supper, and when the Ten Commandments are read, asking mercy and grace
after

after every commandment ; so do you. Their priests and people read the Psalms, alternately, verse by verse ; so do yours. They sit at reading the lessons, uncover themselves in the churches, sing anthems, &c. with vocal and instrumental music, and bow to the East, and at the name of Jesus, or rather at the name Jesus ; so do you, without one word of authority from the Christians' only rule of faith.

Farther, they dedicate their churches to saints, after the manner of the Pagans of old, and build them East and West ; so do you. They have their superior priests, as bishops, arch-bishops, &c. in imitation of the Pagan flamins and arch-flamins ; so have you. They have their deans, &c. to minister in cathedrals, and their parsons, &c. to minister in parishes ; so have you. And they have their clerical habits, as surplices, &c. as the Pagan priests had before them ; and so have you, without any warrant from the holy scriptures.

Your method of ordination is also the same, and all the circumstances of time, place, admission, &c. relating to it, the same. The only times of ordaining the priests and deacons of both churches, are the four Sundays immediately after the Ember-weeks. The only place is the cathedral ; and the only time, when divine service is performing. The Popish and English bishops are bound to examine the candidates diligently. The Popish and English deacons are, according to the regulation of both

both churches, to continue in office one whole year, before they can commence presbyters. Neither Popish nor English deacons can be admitted to holy orders until they are twenty-three years of age, nor to presbyter's orders before they are full twenty-four years of age. The English as well as the Popish archdeacon is obliged to present those who are to be ordained to the bishop, saying, **REVEREND FATHER.** The English and Popish bishops, upon this occasion, ask the archdeacons the same questions, "Do you know them to be worthy?" and then proclaim, "If any one has aught against the candidates, let him now declare it." After the archdeacons, who have searched and known the candidates hearts, have given in the usual answers, the English as well as the Popish bishops deliver the New Testament to the candidates, saying, Receive power to read the Gospel in the church of God *. Then comes in, in both services, Lord have mercy upon us, &c. God the Son, &c. Both churches sing the very same hymn, with this only difference, that the one is in Latin, the other in English. The elected humbly kneeling, both English and Popish bishops lay their hands on them, saying, Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins thou dost forgive, &c.

* Quere, is not the custom that prevails among a great part of the laity of your church to be deemed *heresy*; namely, the custom of reading the word of God in their families, without a *lawful power* from the bishop?

Then

Then the benediction is the same in both churches. The peace of God—and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be with you, &c. Of all which, not one word in the New Testament.

Lastly, the members of both churches sit at reading the Epistles; and stand, bow, and respond, at reading of the Gospels, bandying perpetually from priest to people, "Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us, &c." in *obedience* to the command in Deuteronomy iv. 2. "Ye shall not add unto the word that I command you, neither shall you diminish aught from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you;" and to obtain the *blessing* promised in Revelations xxii. 18. "If any man shall add unto these things, God will add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." I tremble!

Giving you some time to pause upon the subject of this letter, I subscribe myself once more,

Reverend Sir,

Your's, &c.

PHILALETES.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

REVEREND SIR,

WITH this letter I intend to take my leave of you. I have, I think, in my first letter, sufficiently shewn that you have entirely mistaken the sense of the apostle in your text, and consequently that all your *railing* against the Methodists, built upon your misrepresentation of this text, was without any just reason. I now hope, that you will not be ashamed to do even the Methodists that justice which every fellow-creature demands, and has a right to expect from another, by whom he is injuriously treated.

The Methodists may not, perhaps, upon the whole, thank me for what I have done, as they will find my sentiments, in many respects, diametrically opposite to theirs. I do not, however, think myself the less obliged to vindicate them from a false charge, and to be charitably disposed towards them, whatever be their sentiments, so long as their moral conduct will stand as strict a scrutiny as that of their enemies. But you, Sir, have much more reason, as you may perceive from my second and third letters, to think favourably of the Methodists than I have. They are the true sons of the church, notwithstanding

ing all your insinuations to the contrary : and, as such, they unquestionably deserve the esteem and thanks of every flaming advocate for the church.

But both you and they, in my opinion, "Expose *the true religion* to the scorn and contempt of Infidels and Deists. For any one, who has the use of his reason, and a tolerable share of understanding, must perceive, that *your manner of interpreting* the word of God, *in conformity to the abstruse mysteries of the thirty-nine articles*, is such as to make the Christian religion appear ridiculous ; and is, in effect, to burlesque it. So that when libertines find religion represented in such a despicable light, they imagine they have sufficient reason to justify their treating it with contempt ; and therefore imprudently fix that reproach upon religion, which is due only to the misrepresentation of it. And, however wrong it may be in them to do so, yet it cannot be denied but that they had too much occasion for it ; not only from the church of Rome, but also *from the church of England, and from all the established churches in the world.*"

Though the greatest part of the preceding paragraph is your own, I cannot join with you in affirming, as you immediately after do, that "The dark and confused discourses of an enthusiast justify the laughing at them ;" *adding*, "For no one can be serious in a farce, or avoid ridiculing what is in itself ridiculous." I rather think that the serious, when labour-

ing under the grossest delusions, demand our compassion, and that nothing can justify us in laughing at them. Neither can I agree with you, "That we cannot avoid ridiculing what is in itself ridiculous." What can be more ridiculous than the life of a hardened and incorrigible sinner? But is such a one, posting to destruction, a just object of ridicule? Or, do you always find yourself disposed to be merry, and irresistibly led to exercise your talents of ridicule, when such a one comes in your way? If it be true, however, that all dark and confused discourses should be treated as you observe they should, you cannot be displeased with me for giving you a hint, which you are welcome to improve as much as you think proper, for your own benefit, and the entertainment of the public.—The hint is this: That there may be some excellent farces made out of a book which you have subscribed, and which, though set up as the standard of the orthodox faith, and assented to by the Methodists on the one side, and by you on the other side, "is only the spectre of religion, murdered by ignorance and enthusiasm."

I would not have you, then, upon recognising the Methodistical system to be the same with your own, to sit down contented with either. I would rather have you to shake off the galling fetters of all human authority whatever, in matters of faith, to apply yourself seriously to the doctrines of Jesus Christ, and to learn from him, what doctrines you should teach

teach and believe, what duties you should recommend and practise. You will then stand upon a foundation that can never be moved. Deists will be afraid to attack you. All the principles of enthusiasm will tumble down before you; reason will support you; charity will inspire you; candour will direct you; and hope, and peace, and joy, and a serene confidence in God, will be your constant companions. You will then be no longer put out of humour with the mere *weaknesses* of your brethren around you. You will then be yourself amidst the bitter scenes of adversity, as much as in the calm breezes of prosperity. Being no farther hampered with human systems, nor necessitated to grope in the dark for bewildering arguments to reconcile the most jarring contradictions, but solicitous only for the propagation of the truth, and illuminated with the heavenly unclouded light of the Gospel, you will always see your way clear and smooth before you, and be always satisfied from yourself. Your nights will be spent in refreshing slumbers: your days will be no longer embittered with the rancour of party disputes. You will pass through the journey of life without shame or confusion, with perpetually-increasing honour and glory; and death, your last enemy, will lead you to all the fullness of those pleasures that flow at God's right-hand for evermore.

What a happy exchange will you make!
You are at present involved in a thousand em-

barrassments, afraid to speak the truth if you discover it, or, if you have spoken it, obliged again to explain it away, lest you should seem to act inconsistently with your profession, or be found fighting against your Anti-Protestant church. At present, Sir, consider seriously how ineffectual all your endeavours are to inculcate moral duties upon the minds of your audience, when every true churchman must believe that he has nothing to do with the doctrines of repentance and amendment; that he has only to ask for your absolution upon his death-bed, and receive a safe passport to Heaven. And, at present, what pain must it give yourself, and how little edifying must it be to your hearers, to declare, that unless we believe—it is shocking to repeat what—we must, without doubt, perish everlastingly? How contradictory, as I said before, are your anathemas to your absolutions, &c.

Welcome to me, then, that Sacred Book, which disperseth every cloud, which delivereth me from all human authority and interposition, in matters of faith, and teacheth me a religion that is countenanced by the whole volume of nature, and is in perfect harmony with the innate sentiments of my own mind. A religion that is founded in reason *, that is se-

* I think I may well say a religion *founded in reason*. The visible footsteps of a Deity, and of his providence, in all his works; the expediency of a divine revelation; the perfection of the Christian; the character of Jesus, its blessed author; the spotless purity of his life and manners; his

conded by conscience, that strengtheneth and
realiseth all *our longings after immortality*, that

his fervent piety and perfect resignation to the will of his heavenly father in all things; his astonishing meekness, humility, condescension, and inoffensiveness; his indefatigable labours in doing good; his exemplary patience and self-denial; his friendship towards sinners; his benevolence towards all; his love even to his implacable enemies, and bloody persecutors; the wisdom with which he spoke; the excellency and sublimity of his doctrines; their tendency to refine and purify the hearts, and humanize the tempers of men; the objects these doctrines aimed at, namely, that we would worship the one only living and true God in spirit and in truth, that we would be just and merciful to our neighbours, nay, that we would love them as ourselves, and that we would pray for and do good to those who hate us and most despitefully use us, and that we would be sober and temperate ourselves, place our affections principally on things above, and cast all our cares upon the infinitely gracious and omnipotent parent of the universe; the exact correspondency of ancient prophecy to the extraordinary manner of his birth; the most remarkable occurrences of his life; the shameful and ignominious death he suffered, and his speedy and triumphant victory over it; the innumerable and stupendous miracles he performed openly in the sight of the world, in attestation of his divine mission, all of them confessedly beyond any power barely human to accomplish, and, above all, God's raising him up from the dead three days after his crucifixion, as he himself foretold, and as was circumstantially predicted of him by the ancient prophets; the amazing spread of his religion, shortly after his ascension, over almost all parts of the known world, by a few fishermen, without power or influence, without learning or eloquence, in opposition to the prejudices of both Jews and Gentiles, in opposition to their own former favourite schemes, sentiments, and passions, in opposition to the scorn and derision of their friends and kindred, and the cruel insults, and bitter persecutions of their adversaries; their undaunted boldness, in preaching, that the same Jesus who was crucified, and whom they before had cowardly forsaken, was alive again, and
exalted

is confirmed by the testimony of the heavens, and by the frame of the universe, and that, contrary to the opinion of lord Shaftsbury (see Theological Repository, vol. II. No. 4.) hath stood the severest test of ridicule! This is a religion worthy of man, suitable to the boundless desires of the children of God, the heirs and expectants of future, unfading, everlasting glory.

Here are no mysteries, no incomprehensibles, no scholastic subtleties to confound, distract, and terrify the mind. Here all is reason and truth. The way to eternal life is so easy, so obvious, that the *wayfaring men, though fools, cannot err therein*. And this is

exalted by the right-hand of God; the singular simplicity and similarity of their narration of facts; their unconquered self-denial, in foregoing all the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, and exposing themselves to all the miseries which mortals could either fear or suffer; their resolution and constancy in undertaking and bearing up against the most difficult, dangerous, and laborious hardships; their resignation to the will of Heaven under all their afflictions; their joy in being counted worthy to suffer such things for Christ's sake; their unshaken firmness of mind, and triumphant exclamations, when expiring in the flames, on the gibbet, or on the cross; and the gradual and full accomplishment of their prophecies relating to the rise and progress of Anti-Christ; all these things put together, make me give my testimony to the truth of the Gospel. The amiableness, the loveliness of all its precepts, the dread of falling under the just displeasure of God for neglecting so great salvation, and the glorious prospects, the eternal and unspeakable rewards that are set before the righteous, induce me to regulate my conduct, and practice according to it. And the duty and affection which I bear to children of the same universal Father, urge me to recommend it to all my fellow-creatures.

life eternal, to know or acknowledge the Father to be the only true God, and, consequently, to love, obey, worship, and bow down before him; and to acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the ambassador of the Father, and consequently to walk even as he walked, and instructed us to walk.

Compare this doctrine of the wisest, the greatest, the best of men, the reformer, the enlightener, the Saviour of the world, with the wisdom of Athanasius, and can you hesitate, or be at any loss whom to follow? Hear, again, the affectionate address of this most holy man of God, to those who sat in darkness, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." What consolation doth he administer to the truly penitent! Meditate upon his spotless purity, his fervent piety, his perfect resignation to the will of Heaven, his invincible patience, humility, and self-denial, his boundless benevolence, and unwearied labours in doing good to the bodies and to the souls of men, and you must be charmed with his character, and glory in being called by his name.

Read all his doctrines, and you must admire, approve, and embrace them. "To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God; to be sober and temperate, and holy in all manner of conversation; to be kind and compassionate, forbearing and charitable; to offend no fellow-creature by violent measures or opprobrious language, but to do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and to love our very enemies; to fear God more than all
the

the world ; to love not the world, neither the things of the world, but to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and the unspeakable treasures of a good conscience ; and, in every extremity, to cast all our cares and burthens upon God, who maketh all things work together for their benefit who love him, and keep his commandments ; to rely upon his goodness, which never faileth, and hope for his deliverance, assistance, and the overflowings of his loving kindness ;" these are the principles of a Christian, and these principles constitute the supreme glory of man.

That religion which descended from above, and which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, will ever approve itself to the calm, unbiaſſed reflections of all the children of men. May this religion be always my *jewel of great price* in this world ! And that this religion may be your most inestimable treasure also, and that you may become one of its greatest ornaments, is, Reverend Sir, the fervent prayer of

Your very humble Servant,

January 19th
1771.



PHILAETHES

F I N I S